

# Disability and Career Services Provision for Students with Disabilities at Institutions of Higher Education in Japan: An Overview of Key Legislation, Policies, and Practices

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## Abstract

In 2013, the Japanese government passed antidiscrimination legislation that, starting in April 2016, requires all national and public institutions of higher education (IHEs) to accommodate students with disabilities. The legislative mandate to ensure that higher education is accessible to students with disabilities, coupled with growth in the number of students with disabilities attending university or college, increases pressure on Japanese policymakers to build the capacity of their higher education system. The paper provides an overview of key legislation and policies in disability and higher education in Japan, followed by a description of the current state of cross-disability services provision at Japanese IHEs. Included is a focus on career development and employment (career services provision), as these are critical aspects of comprehensive supports for students with disabilities in higher education. The paper is based on a review of current literature and secondary survey data, as well as key informant interviews with Japanese government officials, disability and career services personnel, and faculty directly involved in disability and career services provision at Japanese IHEs. It concludes with potential areas for Japan-United States learning and information sharing.

*Keywords:* Disability, reasonable accommodations, disability services, career services, higher education, Japan

Over the past decade many countries, including Japan, have recognized the importance of higher education as a stepping-stone to competitive employment and community membership for persons with disabilities. To this end, numerous legislations and policies have been implemented nationally and internationally, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006, Article 24 of the CRPD requires

States Parties [to] recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education. With a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity,...[to] ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and life long learning directed to...enabling persons with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society. (United Nations, 2006)

The article mandates nations to provide reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities so that they can exercise their right. Japan is one of 157 countries that have ratified the convention (United Nations Enable, n.d.).

Starting April 1, 2016, all national and public institutions of higher education (IHEs) in Japan must accommodate students with disabilities in accordance with the Act on the Elimination of Disability Discrimination (Law No. 65) that was passed by the Japanese Diet prior to the ratification of the CRPD, on June 19, 2013. The Act also encourages (but does not mandate) private IHEs to provide disability accommodations.

The concept of “reasonable accommodation” is emerging in Japan. It is broadly defined in the Act, and policymakers are currently in the process of making regulations to guide universities and colleges in the provision of reasonable accommodations and the development of processes and procedures for students

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who feel that their request for reasonable accommodations was unreasonably denied. Although the concept of reasonable accommodation in Japan is recent, data from an annual national survey of Japanese IHEs suggest that about 60% of institutions support students with disabilities in some way, and that institutions vary widely in terms of the number of students with disabilities they support (Japan Student Services Organization [JASSO], 2015a).

The infrastructure to address the needs of students with disabilities in higher education in Japan is underdeveloped. Only about 10% of IHEs have a disability services department, office, or center, and about 18% have policies and procedures that guide the provision of disability services (JASSO, 2015a). Despite the lack of infrastructure, the number of students with disabilities, particularly those with developmental disabilities, entering university or college has been increasing (although the percent as a total of all students entering IHEs is low).

The legislative mandate to ensure that higher education is accessible to students with disabilities, coupled with growth in the number of students with disabilities attending university or college, increases pressure on Japanese policymakers to build the capacity of their higher education system, providing an important opportunity for both Japan and the United States to learn from each other's experiences. Building higher education's disability capacity is also critical for Japan's businesses, which subject to a mandatory disability employment quota, are facing significant challenges in recruiting qualified employees with disabilities.

This paper provides an overview of key legislation and policies in disability and higher education in Japan, and then describes the current state of cross-disability services provision at Japanese IHEs. Included is a focus on career development and employment (career services provision), as these are critical aspects of comprehensive supports for students with disabilities in higher education. The paper concludes with potential areas for Japan-United States learning and information sharing.

The information presented in this paper is based on a review of current literature and secondary survey data, as well as key informant interviews conducted between April 2014 and July 2015 in Japan. Key informants included Mr. Yusuke Shoji, unit chief of the Student Support and Exchange Division, Higher Education Bureau, Ministry of Education, Culture,

Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT); Mr. Soichiro Yamada, executive director of the Student Services Department, JASSO (JASSO is a semi-governmental agency under MEXT); Ms. Mieko Watanabe, PhD, professor emeritus of Tsukuba University and head of the Committee for Career Services Staff Development, JASSO; Takeo Kondo, PhD, associate professor at the Tokyo University Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology, founding member / administrative staff of the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) JAPAN, and member of an expert committee convened by MEXT in April 2015 to provide guidance on the implementation of the new disability antidiscrimination legislation in higher education; and Mr. Masaru Kubota, head of the Division of Career Services, Department of Student Affairs, Tsukuba University.

Additionally, the author co-facilitated three study group meetings with eight Japanese individuals who were selected based on their expertise in disability, higher education, and employment. The purpose of these expert meetings was to inform the development of a project to train disability and career services personnel from Japanese IHEs in the US on how to better serve students with disabilities. The Nippon Foundation of Japan sponsored this activity (and the resulting project), with meetings held between January and April 2015. Results from these expert meetings also informed the development of this paper.

### **Key Legislation and Policies Related to Disability, Higher Education, and Employment**

The Constitution of Japan stipulates that all people, including those with disabilities, have "a right to receive an equal education according to their ability" (Article 26). Article 4 of the 1947 Basic Law on Education, as amended in December 2006 (Law No. 120), specifically mentions people with disabilities, mandating "national and local governments [to] provide support in education to persons with disabilities, to ensure that they are given adequate education in accordance with their condition."

On June 19, 2013, the Japanese Diet passed the Act on the Elimination of Disability Discrimination (Law No. 65), which protects people with disabilities from being discriminated against in higher education settings. The law defines persons with disabilities in the same way as the 1970 Basic Law for Persons with Disabilities, as amended in June 2013 (Law No. 65), as "individuals who have physical, intellectual or mental

impairments (including developmental disability) and whose daily life or social life is substantially and continuously limited due to their impairments and various social barriers” (Chapter 1, Article 2).

Starting April 1, 2016, all national and public IHEs in Japan must accommodate students with disabilities in accordance with the new disability antidiscrimination law (Article 7). They must also create procedures and processes for students with disabilities to file a complaint if their request for reasonable accommodations has been denied or insufficiently addressed (Article 7). The law encourages, but does not mandate, private IHEs to follow these provisions.

As of December 2014, there were 86 national universities, 92 public universities, and 603 private universities in Japan (MEXT, 2014a). Japanese national universities were until March 2004 directly operated by MEXT. On April 1, 2004, these universities obtained legal status by becoming “national university corporations,” an effort that was part of a wider government reform of Japanese IHEs (Oba, 2006). MEXT provides grants to both national and private universities to cover operational expenses. In contrast to national and private universities, public universities are operated by local governments, either prefectural or municipal, and are largely funded with local taxpayer monies. (A prefecture is the equivalent of a state in the US. There are a total of 47 prefectures in Japan.) Similar to national universities, public universities were allowed to incorporate starting on April 1, 2004 (MEXT, 2009).

Prior to the passing of the new disability anti-discrimination legislation, the 2011 amendment to the Basic Law for Persons with Disabilities (Law No. 90), for the first time, introduced the concept of reasonable accommodation into Japanese legislation (Japanese Cabinet Office, 2012). Article 4.2 of the amendment recognizes that failure to provide disability accommodations constitutes an act of discrimination, a stipulation that came without any legal enforcement in general.

The concept of “reasonable accommodation” is emerging in Japan. There continues to be a need to raise awareness among educators and those that support students with disabilities about this concept, and how it can be effectively translated into disability services policy and practice. To this end, the MEXT Higher Education Bureau convened a committee of 15 experts in 2012 and tasked them with developing a future framework for higher education disabili-

ty services provision in Japan (MEXT, 2012a). The committee was asked to develop a working definition of reasonable accommodation for higher education; to define the target, types, and scope of reasonable accommodations to be provided at Japanese IHEs; and to identify short-term, medium-term, and long-term challenges to translating some of these ideas into practice, involving key stakeholders (government agencies, professional organizations, IHEs, etc.) in this process.

The committee summarized the results of its work in a final report (MEXT, 2012a). The report defines reasonable academic accommodations as:

Any necessary and appropriate changes / adjustments which universities and other similar institutions make in order to ensure that persons with disabilities can enjoy and exercise the right to receive education equally as others. These adjustments or changes are made in consideration of the individual situation of each student with disabilities and are made in response to their needs for receiving education in the university or other similar institutions...Reasonable accommodations are not meant to place unbalanced or excessive burden on the universities or similar institutions either structurally or financially. (MEXT, 2012a, section 4, para. 8)

In February 2015, the Japanese government passed a “Basic Policy on the Promotion of Elimination of Disability Discrimination” to guide the implementation of the new law in all relevant fields, including education, employment, health, and public transportation (Japanese Cabinet Office, 2015). The policy defines key terms (such as persons with disabilities and private-sector employers), explains concepts (such as unfair discriminatory treatment, reasonable accommodations, and undue burden), and provides examples of unfair discriminatory treatment and examples of reasonable accommodations. The policy further outlines broad measures that national and local government agencies and private-sector employers should incorporate as they develop their own implementation guidelines. (Private-sector employers are mandated not to discriminate on the grounds of disability; however, they are not obliged to provide reasonable accommodations.) Measures include developing barrier-free environments, creating systems for dispute resolution and consultation, and con-

ducting professional development activities (such as staff training, information dissemination, and awareness-raising). National and local government agencies and private-sector employers must develop their own guidelines by April 1, 2016.

To this end, MEXT convened a second expert committee in April 2015 to provide input on the development of guidelines for implementing the new law in all of the sectors that MEXT oversees, including higher education. Published in December 2015, the MEXT guidelines document outlines disability discrimination (Article 2) and the provision of reasonable accommodations (Article 3). Article 4 addresses the main responsibilities of personnel in charge of promoting disability antidiscrimination, including: (a) providing guidance and awareness-raising, (b) dealing with complaints, and (c) overseeing the provision of reasonable accommodations. Article 5 is about taking disciplinary action against personnel who commit acts of disability discrimination or fail to provide reasonable accommodations to persons with disabilities. Article 6 outlines the development of a consultation system for persons with disabilities and other stakeholders, and Article 7 recommends the provision of training and awareness-raising to all personnel (MEXT, 2015a).

Additionally, MEXT has tasked the Japan Association of National Universities (JANU) with developing model policies and procedures for disability services provision at national universities. In 2015, JANU published a guidelines template for national universities to promote disability antidiscrimination on university campuses (JANU, 2015). The guidelines template is very similar to the MEXT guidelines, and provides additional detail. Article 4 is about the development of a personnel system to address disability discrimination, and the roles and responsibilities of personnel, including university leadership, department heads, and personnel in charge of disability antidiscrimination. Articles 8 and 9 outline the development of a consultation system and a dispute resolution system for students with disabilities, their families, and other stakeholders. JANU sent the guidelines template along with a cover letter and reference materials (lists of examples of discriminatory treatment and of reasonable accommodations) to all national universities, with a request to use this template for developing their own guidelines.

By mandating equal access to higher education, the new disability antidiscrimination law is expect-

ed to increase the number of university students with disabilities in Japan, thereby expanding the labor pool of individuals with disabilities. This is particularly relevant for companies that must meet the mandatory disability employment quota (explained below). Private-sector companies in particular have found it difficult to fill their quota of jobs with qualified individuals with disabilities, partly because of the small number of students with disabilities graduating with university degrees.

Established under the 1960 Disabled Persons Employment Promotion Law, as amended in June 2014 (Law No. 69), the quota-levy system requires public-sector and private-sector employers to fill a certain percentage of their positions with people with disabilities. Private-sector employers who fail to meet the quota must pay a penalty or “levy.” In April 2013, the Japanese government raised the quota for private-sector employers from 1.8% to 2.0%, and for public-sector employers from 2.1% to 2.3% (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare [MHLW], 2012a). The quota for prefectural and municipal boards of education was also raised, from 2.0% to 2.2%. The quota has helped to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities (MHLW, 2012b), although the rate has not reached the stipulated 2.0% in the private sector, with less than half of private-sector employers meeting the quota (Japan Organization for Employment of the Elderly, Persons with Disabilities, and Job Seekers [JEED], 2011; MHLW, 2012c).

## **Disability and the Higher Education System**

### **Funding for disability services and supports.**

The Japanese government subsidizes national and private universities; subsidies also cover disability-related services and supports. National and private universities differ with respect to how the subsidies are paid. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, MEXT’s general budget for education, culture, sports, science, and technology was ¥5,338 billion (about \$43 billion) (MEXT, 2015b). The operating budget for national universities was ¥1,101 billion (about \$9 billion), or 20.6% of the MEXT’s general budget. The operating budget for national universities includes several categories, one being “special operating budget,” from which universities can draw funds to cover disability-related services and supports. Although figures are available on the amount of funding each national university receives from the government, information on how these funds are used, particularly with respect



to disability, are hard to come by. According to key informant sources, national universities are not required to report on the use of funds for disability services and supports, which limits the government's ability to ensure that funds are used effectively, efficiently, and appropriately.

Since 2013, MEXT has made available additional funding for national universities to build their disability services capacity in response to a recommendation made by the first MEXT expert committee (2012a) that IHEs should set up a disability services office (S. Yusuke, MEXT, personal communication, July 15, 2015). All national universities can apply for this funding; successful institutions are selected on a competitive basis and receive approximately ¥9,000,000 (about \$73,000) per institution. As of July 2015, 25 out of the 86 national universities received this special funding: six were funded in 2013, 12 in 2014, and seven in 2015. National universities typically use the funding to establish (part-time) disability services coordinator positions for which they recruit existing faculty who are involved in disability services provision (S. Yusuke, MEXT, personal communication, July 15, 2015).

The Japanese government not only subsidizes national but also private universities; subsidies are paid through a so-called "Promotion and Mutual Aid Corporation for Private Schools in Japan" out of MEXT's general budget. In FY2015, subsidies for private universities amounted to ¥315 billion (about \$2.5 billion) and included disability-related supports and services (MEXT, 2015b).

There are three major disability subsidies (Promotion and Mutual Aid Corporation for Private Schools in Japan, 2015), described briefly below. These subsidies are calculated through a complex process; the discussion that follows offers only a basic overview.

The first subsidy type is intended to cover individual-level, academic supports for students with qualifying disabilities. Those disabilities include visual impairments, hearing impairments, physical disabilities, developmental disabilities, and other types of disabilities for which students receive accommodations. The subsidy amount is ¥1,600,000 (about \$13,000) per student for one academic year.

The second type of subsidy is for institutional-level disability supports. There are eight types of supports, each receiving ¥400,000 (about \$3,300). These include, for example, counselor staffing / allocation, classroom supports, improvements to facilities and

equipment / assistive technology, accommodations for the application / admissions process, activities to educate faculty and staff about accommodations and supports for students with disabilities, and activities to build the capacity of disability services personnel and other support providers.

The third type of subsidy covers the costs for information and communication technology (ICT) and related supports used for teaching, research, and other, similar activities. ¥200,000 (about \$1,600) is earmarked for each type of technology-related support. Types of technology include learning management systems and distance education; the subsidy can also be used to improve academic content delivered via ICT. Details on how institutions use the subsidies are difficult to access.

**Disability-Related government structures for students in higher education.** The Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) is a semi-governmental agency under the MEXT Higher Education Bureau, Student Support and Exchange Division, that specifically focuses on student support. JASSO administers several MEXT programs, including a scholarship loan program, support programs for international students, and other student support programs, including supports for students with disabilities (JASSO, 2014-2015).

Within JASSO, the Student Services Department, Support for Students with Disabilities Division disseminates disability-related information, such as guides for supporting students with disabilities targeted at faculty and staff involved in disability services provision (e.g., JASSO, 2014). This division also maintains an online database of practice cases related to student disability supports by type of disability (JASSO, 2015b). Additionally, JASSO arranges training and professional development opportunities for IHE personnel involved in the provision of student disability services, student career services, and student counseling and mental health services. JASSO surveys all four-year universities, two-year colleges, and technical colleges in Japan annually about disability and related issues and makes the survey results available on its website.

Training and professional development for faculty and staff involved in disability services provision at Japanese IHEs is centralized through JASSO. Following is a brief description of JASSO's training and professional development activities. In FY2014, JASSO in collaboration with Tohoku University and

Hokkaido University, provided two seminars on how to develop a system for student disability services at IHEs (JASSO, n.d.). These seminars were primarily targeted at managers and staff in charge of disability services provision, with a total of 286 individuals attending these events.

Seven more specialized seminars, targeting the same audience, addressed topics such as providing reasonable accommodations in higher education; building disability services capacity; promoting self-awareness and social participation among students with developmental disabilities; supporting students with disabilities in career development; partnering with agencies, organizations, and employers to support the employment of students with developmental disabilities; and promoting accessible design and resource sharing to support students with disabilities (JASSO, n.d.). These seminars were provided in conjunction with other universities. They were held across Japan, with an average of 100 individuals participating in each seminar.

In addition to these seminars, JASSO provides basic and advanced training to faculty and staff directly involved in disability services provision (JASSO, n.d.). Each training is provided twice a year in Tokyo and Osaka (a total of four times), lasts two days, and consists of lectures and follow-up exercises for participants to deepen their understanding of the issues addressed in the lectures. Participation is limited to 200 individuals per basic training session and 80 participants per advanced training session. The number of applications for basic training has consistently been exceeding the number of training placements, indicating a high demand for this type of training (S. Yamada, JASSO, personal communication, July 16, 2015).

Basic and advanced training is complemented by more hands-on workshops. For example, in FY2014, JASSO provided one workshop on supporting students with developmental disabilities, which was held in Tokyo and attended by 161 individuals (JASSO, n.d.). In addition to disability support, JASSO has been incorporating a disability focus into training and professional development for student career services personnel. For example, the “National Career and Job Placement Guidance Meeting” held in 2014 included a session dedicated to career and job placement support for students with disabilities (JASSO, n.d.).

In addition to disability-related training and professional development, JASSO administers a regional

network of universities called the “Learning Support Network for Students with Disabilities” that are to function as centers of disability expertise, providing training and consultation to other IHEs in their region. Established in 2006, the network consists of nine regional centers and three affiliated partners. The nine regional centers are all based at national and private universities: Sapporo Gakuin University, Miyagi University of Education, University of Tsukuba, University of Toyama, Nihon Fukushi University, Doshisha University, Kwansei Gakuin University, Hiroshima University, and Fukuoka University. The three affiliated partners include the National Tsukuba University of Technology (NTUT), the National Institute of Special Needs Education (NISE, a semi-governmental agency under MEXT), and the National Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Disabilities, which is part of the National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation (NIVR, a semi-governmental agency under MHLW).

Regional centers vary greatly in their ability to provide training and consultation, in part, because JASSO does not provide funding to conduct these activities. Training and consultation typically take the form of center faculty serving as instructors for JASSO seminars and workshops. In the past, JASSO has commissioned regional centers to conduct research on specific issues in disability and higher education; however, there is currently limited funding to support these types of activities (S. Yamada, JASSO, personal communication, July 16, 2015). The overall lack of financial support for regional centers has been an impediment to supporting IHEs regionally and to building the overall capacity of the Learning Support Network to influence disability policy and practice in higher education.

Since 2014, MEXT has been promoting internships with industry as a way to improve employment skills and opportunities for university students, including students with disabilities (MEXT, 2014b). The goal is to develop a system of higher education that meets current and future industry labor needs. This effort is part of the “Japan Revitalization Strategy JAPAN IS BACK” that the Japanese government announced in June 2013 and that consists of a set of structural reforms (including university reforms) to improve economic growth and the competitiveness of the Japanese economy.

To this end, JASSO is implementing a range of efforts (JASSO, 2014–2015); it set up a special com-

mittee for the promotion of internships that consists of representatives from universities, major economic organizations, and experts in the field. The committee is tasked with evaluating and advising so-called “Regional Internship Promotion Organizations.” These are regional networks of universities, local governments, economic and non-profit organizations, and other entities that strategically promote and facilitate student internship initiatives in their region. As of FY2014, there were 11 collaborations involving 113 universities.

In addition to the special committee, JASSO provides training to university faculty and staff involved in internship efforts. It also conducts surveys on internship initiatives run by universities, and on the number of students, including students with disabilities, who participate in these internships.

### **Representation of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education**

As is the case in the US, people with disabilities access higher education in Japan at significantly lower rates compared to those without disabilities. In 2014, students with disabilities made up 0.44% (or 14,127) of all students in higher education (JASSO, 2015a). Figures are based on a national survey of IHEs conducted annually by JASSO. A total of 1,185 IHEs responded to the 2014 survey (100% response rate), including 780 four-year universities, 348 two-year colleges, and 57 technical colleges. The number of students with disabilities enrolled in IHEs, particularly those with mental health disabilities and autism, has almost trebled since 2006, when it was 4,937 (JASSO, 2007). Kondo, Takahashi, and Shirasawa (2015) suggest that:

the increased enrollment of students with ‘invisible disabilities’ may mean simply that social awareness of such disabilities, which has progressed across recent years, has helped in detecting the presence of these students through various student services (e.g., counseling and health services). In other words, this population might have already been on campus, and thus may not have actually increased. (p. 423)

Even if the number of students with disabilities at universities has held steady over time, the increase in disclosure and acknowledgement of invisible disabilities is a trend that will continue to build.

Universities and colleges use a variety of sources for collecting student disability information, which they then report in aggregated format to JASSO (M. Enomoto, JASSO, personal communication, August 10, 2015). Sources include requests made by students or their guardians for accommodations (for entrance examinations, courses, etc.), medical examination of students at entrance to university or college, student consultations with the university or college health center, students reporting a disability on their university or college application, and reports by teaching staff on students’ disabilities. Generally, students do not have to report to the university or college that they have a disability unless they need accommodations. If they do need support, then they have to provide documented evidence of their disability in the form of a disability certificate, medical records, etc.

JASSO data also indicate that universities and colleges vary greatly with respect to the number of students with disabilities enrolled, from no students (352 out of 1,185 institutions) to more than 21 students enrolled (173 institutions; JASSO, 2015a). Table 1 provides a summary of the data. About 70% of all surveyed IHEs (833) reported having at least one student with a disability. The largest number of IHEs (222) reported between two and five students with disabilities.

In terms of type of disability, about 39% of all students with disabilities enrolled in IHEs in 2014 had health issues or physical disabilities, decreasing from about 53% percent in 2006 (JASSO, 2015a, 2007). Table 2 provides a summary of the data. Students with “other” disabilities / diseases, including those with mental health disabilities, are a growing population, almost tripling between 2006 and 2014. In fact, students with mental health disabilities accounted for about 20% of all students with disabilities in 2014, making it the second largest group of students with disabilities. Students with developmental disabilities increased in representation more than seven times between 2006 and 2014. Of those, students with autism accounted for about 14% of all students with disabilities in 2014, increasing from about 2% in 2006. Students with hearing and speech impairments, and those with visual impairments, represented about 12% and 5%, respectively, of all students with disabilities in 2014.

Although the number of students with disabilities has almost trebled since 2006, people with disabilities continue to experience substantial barriers to access-



ing higher education. In 2012, the Tokyo Foundation published a report on disability in higher education in Japan. The report identified three systemic barriers to accessing higher education for individuals with disabilities: (1) lack of information on the types of supports available at IHEs, (2) lack of coordination between higher education institutions on one side and high schools and potential employers on the other side, and (3) reluctance on the part of IHEs to shoulder the costs of accommodating students with disabilities (Tokyo Foundation, 2012).

Kondo (2015) suggests that support for students with disabilities at Japanese IHEs with dedicated disability services offices has improved over the last years, that faculty and staff involved in disability services provision at these institutions are becoming more knowledgeable about and adept in supporting students with different types of disabilities, and that efforts are made to provide students with information and guidance to help them access disability supports at their institution. The latter effort in particular, Kondo argues, is an indication of

the existence [of] broadly accumulated know-how for supporting students with disabilities at Japanese IHEs ...[but this] know-how has not been based on the concepts of reasonable accommodation which should be offered in all institutions from the viewpoint of antidiscrimination and therefore based on good practices in some advanced universities.” (section 3.4., para. 1 and 2)

### **IHE Infrastructure and Capacity for Disability and Career Services Provision for Students with Disabilities**

**Disability services.** JASSO data suggest that disability services tend to be provided by administrative, teaching, and counseling staff who work part-time, in addition to students, and that most IHEs do not have any policies and procedures that guide disability services provision (JASSO, 2015a). This situation is compounded by a lack of training and qualifications for personnel who provide disability services (Aoki, 2007; PEPNet-Japan, 2012).

As summarized in Table 3, a majority of IHEs (80% or 943 out of 1,185) assign the responsibility for disability services provision to existing university and college departments such as student affairs (JASSO, 2015a). Only about 10% (120 institutions) have a department, center, or office dedicated to disability

services provision, and about 18% (219 institutions) have policies and procedures that guide the provision of student disability services.

A 2011 JASSO survey of 914 IHEs provides more detail on the types of departments or structures that IHEs use for disability services provision (JASSO, 2012). The most frequently reported structure was generic administrative offices (reported by 51.4%, or 470 out of 914 IHEs), followed by offices for student services (24.9% or 228), health care centers (17.4% or 159), special committees for supporting students with disabilities (7.4% or 68), and disability services offices (5.9% or 54).

These results are consistent with Kondo’s observations (2015) that “the need for dedicated disability services offices has not been well recognized by Japanese IHEs” (section 2, para. 3). Indeed, the percentage of universities and colleges with dedicated student disability services departments, centers, or offices has not significantly increased since the report by the MEXT Committee (2012a), which recommended that IHEs create such structures and also make public their numbers of students with disabilities.

In terms of staffing for disability services provision, a majority of IHEs (84%, or 995 out of 1,185) only use part-time staff to provide supports to students with disabilities (JASSO, 2015a). About 11% (125 institutions) use a combination of full-time and part-time staff. Table 4 provides a summary of the data. In addition to internal staff, about 42% (493 institutions) also involve external staff, mostly counselors, doctors, and technology specialists, in some aspect of disability services provision at their institution. The use of students (“peer tutors”) to assist with the provision of disability services and supports is addressed in the paper later.

A little less than two thirds of the IHEs surveyed by JASSO (775 out of 1,185) reported implementing one or more activities to build institutional capacity to support students with disabilities, or assisting other institutions in this effort (JASSO, 2015a). Table 5 provides a summary of the data. The most frequently reported activities were consultations and round-table meetings for students with disabilities and support staff, provision of career services and related support to students with disabilities, and provision of training on disability issues to faculty and staff at other universities and colleges.

Little is known about the professional backgrounds and expertise of the faculty and staff involved



in student disability services provision. Japan only recently (October 2014) established a professional organization dedicated to cross-disability issues and higher education. This organization is called “Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) JAPAN” (<http://ahead-japan.org/>), a partner organization of AHEAD in the US.

AHEAD JAPAN’s mission is to improve supports for students with disabilities by organizing conferences that address disability service delivery practice and research; providing information, resources, training, and professional development on disability issues; promoting and facilitating shared learning and collaboration among Japanese IHEs related to disability services provision; and promoting, conducting, and publishing research that can inform disability service delivery practice. Fifty-two universities have joined AHEAD JAPAN; the organization held its first annual conference in June 2015.

In addition to AHEAD JAPAN, PEPNet-Japan (<http://www.pepnet-j.org>) is a collaboration of 22 universities and nine colleges to support students with hearing impairments, as well as faculty and staff including disability services personnel, by providing training, consultation, and resources. The organization was established in October 2004 and is modeled after PEPNet in the US (<http://www.pepnet.org>). In 2013, PEPNet-Japan received the “Prime Minister Award” from the Japanese government for its dedicated efforts to promote “barrier-free” and “universal design” practices in Japanese society (Japanese Cabinet Office, 2014).

**Career services.** In contrast to the low number of IHEs with dedicated disability services offices, JASSO data suggest that a majority of institutions in Japan (92.2%, or 843 out of 914) have a career services office (JASSO, 2012). Figures are based on a national survey of IHEs conducted by JASSO in 2011 that addressed disability and employment supports for students with disabilities. A total of 914 out of 1,202 institutions responded to the survey (76%), including 589 universities, 273 colleges, and 52 technical colleges. A more recent MEXT report estimates the percent of IHEs that have a career services office to be 97% (MEXT, 2013).

JASSO data indicate that most of these career centers assume the responsibility for career development and employment support for students with disabilities, and that some also involve their disability services office. Of the 843 IHEs that had a career ser-

vices office, 807 (95.7%) reported providing employment support to students with disabilities (JASSO, 2012). Eighty-one of those 807 institutions (10.0%) had career services staff specifically dedicated to students with disabilities. 112 out of 843 institutions (13.3%) collaborated with their disability services office, and more than half (428 or 50.8%) used faculty advisors to assist students with disabilities to prepare for careers. Only a small number of IHEs (65 or 7.7%) reported that employment support for students with disabilities was the sole responsibility of the disability services office.

In addition to internal resources, about 40% of universities and colleges (378 out of 914) reported collaborating with external agencies and organizations regarding career and employment support for students with disabilities, such as public employment services centers (the equivalent of One-Stop Career Centers in the US; 331 institutions), local vocational centers for persons with disabilities (the equivalent of state vocational rehabilitation agencies in the US; 67 institutions), support centers for persons with developmental disabilities (45); support centers for persons with sensory (visual or hearing) impairments (13), vocational training centers (4), and other entities (85).

Furthermore, IHEs provide a range of employment-related services and supports to students, including students with disabilities, as summarized in Table 6. However, less than a quarter of institutions (17.0%, or 155 out of 914) reported that students with disabilities participate in internships, which is surprising given MEXT’s increasing emphasis on this type of work experience. Even fewer institutions (9.7%, or 89 out of 914) reported that they follow up with graduates with disabilities who have found jobs through personal meetings, site visits, or similar methods (JASSO, 2012).

Universities and colleges continue to face barriers to assisting students with disabilities in finding jobs, as detailed in Table 7. These challenges mostly relate to lack of staff capacity, but also include issues that concern the students themselves. The top three challenges were lack of staff knowledge and experience related to employment support for students with disabilities, lack of methods for employment support appropriate for students with particular disabilities, and lack of ability on the part of students to take action (JASSO, 2012).

### **Provision of Accommodations at IHEs**

JASSO data show that more than half of all students with disabilities (7,482 out of 14,127) enrolled in higher education in Japan in 2014 had requested accommodations and received them (JASSO, 2015a). Little is known about the situation of the remaining 6,645 students with disabilities, for example, their needs for support (if any), efforts to request such support, and success in receiving support.

Japanese IHEs vary greatly with respect to the number of students with disabilities they accommodate, from no students (40.9%, or 485 out of 1,185 institutions) to more than 21 students (6.8% or 81 institutions). Table 8 provides a summary of the data. About 60% of all surveyed IHEs (700) reported accommodating at least one student with a disability. The largest number of institutions (411) reported between one and five students with disabilities receiving accommodations.

The types of accommodations that institutions provide generally fall into three categories: test-taking accommodations (such as extended time, readers, assistive technology); classroom accommodations (such as note-taking assistance, audio-recorded lectures, alternate format texts, communication services, preferential seating, enlarged font study materials); and other types of accommodations (such as guides, tutors / teaching assistance).

Japanese IHEs use a combination of faculty, students, and external staff to provide these accommodations. Students with physical disabilities and those with hearing and speech impairments most commonly receive supports from their peers; in the case of students with visual impairment, it is mostly faculty who provide accommodations (JASSO, 2015a).

The use of students (“peer tutors”) to provide disability services by some IHEs is an interesting feature of their service structure. About 10% of institutions (89 out of 914) reported having a peer tutor system in 2010, and 80 of those had a training program for their peer tutors (JASSO, 2012). Students can volunteer to become a peer tutor. Peer tutors assist in many different ways: preparing teaching materials in alternative formats; providing reading and note-taking assistance, speech-to-text transcription, and sign language interpretation; and serving as walking guides. Note that in Japan, personal assistance is sometimes considered to be part of academic accommodations. Japanese universities may provide personal services to students with disabilities (such as assistance with

eating, toileting, moving about, etc.) in cases where local government does not provide this kind of assistance (Kondo, Takahashi, & Shirasawa, 2015).

Tutors are often part of the support team created for individual students with disabilities; students with disabilities are encouraged to manage their teams and supports, and to also help train peer tutors. Peer students are usually trained prior to starting work as a tutor, and are paid for their work by the university. Little is known about the disability status of peer tutors.

At the University of Tsukuba’s Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), peer tutors are a key feature of disability services provision (University of Tsukuba, 2015). The office developed a peer tutor curriculum that is offered in the form of regular classes for which students can get credits. Advanced training and study groups are offered to more experienced peer tutors. Once students have completed the basic peer tutor training, they are assigned to one of three programs that support students with physical disabilities and chronic illnesses, students with visual impairments, or students with hearing impairments. (There is also a support program for students with developmental disabilities, but without assigned peer tutors.)

As of 2013, OSD employed a total of 260 peer tutors serving 70 students with disabilities: 50 tutors supported students with physical disabilities and chronic illnesses, 50 assisted students with visual impairments, and 160 provided supports to students with hearing impairment (University of Tsukuba, 2015). The 260 peer tutors complemented OSD staff consisting of five administrative staff (including the OSD director and assistant director); one medical doctor from the university’s health center and 13 faculty specializing in “disability science” were also affiliated with OSD. Peer tutors who have provided 15+ hours of disability support or 30+ hours of managing a support team receive a certificate.

### **Students with Disabilities, Rates of Graduation, and Employment Outcomes**

As is the case in the US, Japanese students with disabilities graduate from university or college and find employment after graduation at lower rates compared to students without disabilities. JASSO data indicate that about three quarters (2,122) of the 2,885 students surveyed in their final year at university or college graduated in 2014 (graduation rate of 74%) (JASSO, 2015a). Students with sensory impairments (visual, hearing, and speech impairments) are more

likely to graduate compared to students with physical disabilities and those with developmental disabilities. Little is known about the 763 students who did not complete their academic studies.

The graduation rate for the general student population was slightly higher than the rate for students with disabilities, 80% versus 74%. Of the 589,917 students without reported disabilities who enrolled in a national, public, or private university in April 2011, 471,441 graduated four years later. Figures are based on a survey of 779 IHEs, including 86 national universities, 89 public universities, and 604 private universities, that was conducted by MEXT in May 2015 (MEXT, 2015c).

In terms of employment, JASSO data show that about half of the 2,122 students with disabilities (1,061) who graduated in 2014 found full-time employment (employment rate of 50%) (JASSO, 2015a). Employment information was collected about one month after students graduated from university or college. Students with sensory impairments (visual and hearing impairments) are more likely to find employment compared to students with developmental disabilities and those with other types of disabilities. Little is known about how many of the graduates with disabilities who found employment were placed into employment quota jobs.

In comparison, the employment rate for the general population of university graduates was 71% (397,000 out of 560,000 graduates); for college graduates and technical college graduates, the rate was 76% (45,000 out of 59,000) and 56% (5,400 out of 9,600), respectively. Figures are based on a March 2014 survey of 6,250 IHE personnel from 112 institutions who reported on students' post-graduation activities, including employment. Figures captured students' employment status about one month after graduating from university or college. The survey is conducted quarterly by MHLW and MEXT (MHLW, 2015).

### **Conclusion: Areas for Japan-US Learning and Information Sharing**

With the recent passing of disability antidiscrimination legislation, Japan is now at a critical stage to reform its higher education system to make it accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. Some progress has been made in terms of developing basic government policy, guidelines, and directions for implementing the new law, investing in disability

services coordinator positions at national universities, and offering training and professional development for faculty and staff involved in disability services provision. The peer tutor system is an interesting feature of disability services at Japanese IHEs, and an area where the US can learn from Japan.

MEXT has developed guidelines for implementing the new law in higher education. It will be interesting to see how universities apply these guidelines, the challenges they face, and how they address those issues. At the same time, it will be useful to track the model policies and procedures for disability services provision that the Japan Association of National Universities is developing, and how these are similar to or different from approaches used in the US.

Progress is also visible in the field of student disability services, with the recent establishment of AHEAD JAPAN. It will be exciting to see the role that this organization will play in coordinating efforts across IHEs. Ideally, AHEAD JAPAN will create a shared knowledge base on disability and higher education in Japan, and will start to professionalize disability services and those that provide these supports. Given its affiliation with AHEAD US, the organization may also promote cross-national learning and information sharing related to disability and higher education.

There is a great opportunity for Japanese policymakers, educators, and practitioners to learn from the experiences and the lessons gained in the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the US, as the disability antidiscrimination laws in the two countries are similar. The ADA as applied to US universities and colleges has resulted in a large body of research related to documentation of disability, reasonable accommodations, and effective higher education practices as it relates to implementation of the ADA.

While Japan is likely to have different experiences and use different methods of implementing its disability antidiscrimination law, it can look to lessons learned in the US for guidance. The application of Universal Design for Learning UDL principles is still in its early stages at US universities and colleges. Japanese IHEs will be able to see what is working and what is not, and use their own strategies for instructing all types of learners, including students with disabilities.

Finally, both countries share a need for practices, approaches, and models for how to integrate disabili-



ty and career services to provide comprehensive supports for students with disabilities in higher education. Japan's strategy of creating regional partnerships that involve universities, local governments, for-profit and non-profit organizations, and other entities in the development of regional internship schemes for students, including students with disabilities, could be another potential area for cross-national learning and information sharing.

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### **Acknowledgement**

The author would like to thank the key informants for their time and valuable insights into disability and higher education in Japan. I am also grateful to Kimiko Smyth and Miwa Tanabe for their excellent research assistance; Doria Pilling, Kirsten Behling, and Dr. Allison Fleming for their feedback on drafts of the paper; and Anya Weber for her editorial support.

Table 1

*Number of Students with Disabilities Enrolled in Higher Education as Reported by Higher Education Institutions (N=1,185) in 2014*

Number of Students with Disabilities	Institutions	
	Number	Percent
0	352	29.7
1	152	12.8
2 - 5	222	18.7
6 - 10	142	12.0
11 - 20	144	12.2
More than 21	173	14.6
Totals	1,185	100

*Note.* Source: JASSO (2015a).



Table 2

*Number and Percent of Students with Disabilities Enrolled in Higher Education by Disability Type as Reported by Higher Education Institutions in 2006 (N=703) and 2014 (N=1,185)*

Disability Type	Students with Disabilities			
	2006		2014	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Health issues / poor health</b>	<b>877</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>3,037</b>	<b>21.5</b>
<b>Physical disability</b>	<b>1,751</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>2,534</b>	<b>17.9</b>
Upper limb restrictions	240	4.9	332	2.4
Lower limb restrictions	732	14.8	920	6.5
Upper and lower limb restrictions	485	9.8	812	5.7
Other physical disability	294	6.0	470	3.3
<b>Other disability / disease</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>3,144</b>	<b>22.3</b>
Mental health disability	NA	NA	2,826	20.0
Chronic disease	NA	NA	247	1.7
Intellectual disability	NA	NA	46	0.3
Other disability	NA	NA	25	0.2
<b>Developmental disability</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>2,722</b>	<b>19.3</b>
Learning disability	13	0.3	114	0.8
ADHD	20	0.4	363	2.6
High-functioning autism (incl. Asperger's syndrome)	94	1.9	1,956	13.8
Multiple developmental disabilities	NA	NA	289	2.0
<b>Hearing and speech impairment</b>	<b>1,200</b>	<b>24.3</b>	<b>1,654</b>	<b>11.7</b>
Deafness	378	7.7	604	4.3
Hard of hearing	796	16.1	1,009	7.1
Speech impairment	26	0.5	41	0.3
<b>Visual impairment</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>710</b>	<b>5.0</b>
Blindness	176	3.6	137	1.0
Low vision	334	6.8	573	4.1
<b>Multiple disabilities</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>2.3</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4,937</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>14,127</b>	<b>100</b>

Note. Sources: JASSO (2007) and (2015a).

Table 3

*Type of Structure Used for Student Disability Services Provision as Reported by Higher Education Institutions (N=1,185) in 2014*

Type of Structure	Institutions	
	Number	Percent
Department structure	1,048	88.4
General department	928	78.3
Department, office or center dedicated to student disability affairs	120	10.1
Committee structure	889	75.0
General committee	652	55.0
Committee dedicated to student disability affairs	237	20.0
Regulations related to student disability service provision	219	18.5

*Note.* JASSO does not provide a definition or explanation of “department, office, center, or committee for student disability affairs” in its report, nor is there information about how many institutions are using a combination of department and committee structures to address disability issues and, if they do, to what extent these structures cross over in terms of disability functions and how this is handled. Source: JASSO (2015a)

Table 4

*Type of Internal Staff Used for Student Disability Services Provision as Reported by Higher Education Institutions (N=1,185) in 2014*

Type of Internal Staff	Number of Institutions Reporting...	
	Employing only full-time staff or both full-time and part-time staff (N=125)	Employing only part-time staff (N=995)
Coordinators	45	89
Counselors	37	366
Doctors	5	167
AT specialists	14	26
General staff	67	854
Teaching staff / faculty	31	530
Other staff	16	70

*Note:* Sources, JASSO (2015a).

Table 5

*Type of Disability Capacity-Building Activity as Reported by Higher Education Institutions (N=775) in 2014*

	Institutions	
	Number	Percent*
a. Holding consultations and round-table meetings, etc. for students with disabilities and support staff (incl. peer students)	543	70.1
b. Providing career services and related support to students with disabilities	404	52.1
c. Having internal teaching staff provide training on disability and related issues to other universities	283	36.5
d. Providing information about student disability services at in-school events (such as the university entrance ceremony)	230	29.7
e. Publicizing student disability services on the university website	218	28.1
f. Creating and distributing manuals, pamphlets, etc. related to student disability services and support	207	26.7
g. Giving lectures on student disability services and supports and related matters (such as volunteering)	185	23.9
h. Providing faculty and staff development opportunities related to student disability services	160	20.6
i. Training students in providing student disability services and support (such as note-taker training, etc.)	129	16.6
j. Holding various disability awareness-raising events (such as lectures etc.)	64	8.3

*Note.* \* Percentages do not add up to 100% because an institution could implement more than one type of activity. Source: JASSO (2015a).

Table 6

*Type of Student Employment Support Provided as Reported by Higher Education Institutions (N=914) in 2011*

Type of Employment Support	Institutions		Institutions that Provided Disability Accommodations		Institutions that Provided Specialized Support for Students with Disabilities	
	Number	Percent (out of 914)*	Number	Percent (out of 914)*	Number	Percent (out of 914)*
Provide job vacancy information	865	94.6	503	55.0	290	31.7
Distribute guides on job-hunting	768	84.0	351	38.4	103	11.3
Hold career guidance seminars	823	90.0	298	32.6	22	2.4
Hold company orientation sessions	672	73.5	234	25.6	17	1.9
Offer individual career consultations	823	90.0	495	54.2	264	28.9
Offer individual job search consultations	821	89.8	452	49.5	245	26.8
Help identify intern-ships, work experiences	700	76.6	235	25.7	46	5.0
Compile career information database	646	70.7	231	25.3	43	4.7
Help identify job opportunities	703	76.9	256	28.0	96	10.5
Help obtain disability certification in order to gain a (quota) job	-	-	-	-	50	5.5
Other employment support	88	9.6	37	4.0	18	2.0

*Note.* \* Percentages do not add up to 100% because an institution could implement more than one type of employment support. Source, JASSO (2012).



Table 7

*Challenges to Providing Employment Support to Students with Disabilities as Reported by Higher Education Institutions (N=914) in 2011*

Type of Challenge	Institutions	
	Number	Percent*
Staff lack knowledge and experience related to employment support for students with disabilities	532	58.2
Staff lack methods for employment support appropriate for students with particular disabilities	406	44.4
Students lack ability to take action, change lifestyle habits, attitudes, etc.	315	34.5
Staff lack understanding of particular disability types	280	30.6
Students lack understanding of their own disabilities and support needs	221	24.2
Lack of referral to and collaboration with external organizations	212	23.2
Staff have difficulty building relationships with students with disabilities / mutual understanding	202	22.1
Staff have difficulty managing relationships with individuals (families, relatives) related to or associated with students with disabilities	189	20.7
Staff have difficulty explaining disability issues to companies / introducing job-seeking students with disabilities	134	14.7
Staff have difficulty working with students with disabilities on practicing for job interviews and doing group work	120	13.1
Staff have difficulty instructing students with disabilities on resume writing, etc.	112	12.3
Staff have difficulty requesting and implementing disability accommodations and support from employers	104	11.4
Staff have difficulty providing employment information, support with assistive technology, etc. to students with disabilities	63	6.9
Other challenges	55	6.0
Staff have difficulty finding appropriate transportation for graduates with disabilities who found jobs	42	4.6
Limited access to job hunting venues	39	4.3

*Note.* \* Percentages do not add up to 100% because an institution could report more than one type of challenge. Source, JASSO (2012).